

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02255 191703Z

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

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IO-10 /080 W

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R 191613Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2949

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA BY POUCH

AMCONSUL ASMARA BY POUCH

USINT BAGHDAD BY POUCH

UNCLAS BEIRUT 2255

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, ET

SUBJ: ELF SEC GEN REJECTS SUDANESE MEDIATION PROPOSALS

1. LOCAL LEFTIST DAILY AL MUHARRIR (FEB 19) REPORTS ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT (ELF) SYG OTHMAN SALEH SABBEH, IN PRESS CONFERENCE HELD HERE FEB 18, "WELCOMED" SUDANESE MEDIATION EFFORTS IN ERITREAN-ETHIOPIAN CONFLICT BUT FIRMLY REJECTED SUCH INITIATIVES MADE TO DATE BECUASE THEIR TERMS WERE "INADEQUATE". SABBEH, HOWEVER, DID ANNOUNCE HIS INTENTION RETURN TO SUDAN IN NEAR FUTURE TO PURSUE NEGOTIATED POLITICAL SETTLEMENT TO CONFLICT. HE ACKNOWLEDGED EXTENSIVE MEDICAL SUPPLIES GIVEN BY SAUDI ARABIA AND LIBYA IN ADDITION TO MILITARY AID PROVIDED BY OTHER ARAB STATES, NOTABLY SYRIA AND IRAQ. HE ALSO APPEALED FOR INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION IN PRESENT CONFLICT, CALLING ON WORLD TO "SHOULDER ITS RESPONSIBILITIES" AND ON OAU TO TAKE FIRM AND WELL-DEFINED POSITION ON ERITREAN QUESTION DURING UPCOMING MEETING AT KAMPALA.

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 02255 191703Z

2. IN RESPONSE TO SUDANESE APPEAL FOR IMMEDIATE

CEASEFIRE, SABBEH STATED (A) ERITREANS ARE NOT "AGGRESSORS" IN CURRENT CONFLICT; (B) CEASEFIRE WOULD ONLY ALLOW ETHIOPIA TO REGROUP ITS FORCES; (C) ERITREANS NOW IN POSITION OF STRENGTH; AND (D) FIGHTING COULD ONLY CEASE WHEN ETHIOPIAN TROOPS EVACUATED ERITREAN TERRITORY. RE PROPOSAL OF GENERAL AMMESTY FOR ERTREANS, SABBEH SAID REBELS HAD "COMMITTED NO CRIMES, "AND" ARE ONLY FIGHTING FOR LIBERATION OF (THEIR) LAND. ETHIOPIA SHOULD ASK AMMESTY, SINCE ETHIOPIANS HAVE KILLED 40,000 INNOCENT PEOPLE AND ARE INTENT ON KILLING MORE". DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN ETHIOPIAN REGIME AND SECESSIONIST LEADERS, SAID SABBEH, WOULD ONLY BE POSSIBLE WHEN ETHIOPIA RECOGNIZES ERITREAN RIGHT TO "SELF-DETERMINATION AND INDEPENDENCE." TALKS, HE SAID, WOULD THEN CENTER ON COMMON ERITREAN-ETHIOPIAN INTERESTS AND REMOVAL OF ETHIOPIAN TROOPS FROM ERITREA.

3. DESCRIBING ERITREAN STATE HE EXPECTS WOULD EMERGE FROM CURRENT REVOLT, SABBEH SAID IT WOULD REJECT DEMOGOGUERY; THAT ITS FOREIGN POLICY WOULD BE BASED ON NON-ALIGNMENT; THAT "FRIENDSHIP WILL BE EXTENDED TO THOSE WHO BEFRIEND ERITREA"; AND THAT ITS DOMESTIC POLICY WOULD BE DECIDED BY ERITREAN PEOPLE "IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR INTERESTS."

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